

## Message Text

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62

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0671

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ALL CONSULATES IN MEXICO

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MX PINT

SUBJ: ECHEVERRIA SAYS HE'LL RETIRE WHEN TERM ENDS

1. DISCOUNTING IN ONE STATEMENT POSSIBILITIES THAT HE WOULD BECOME UN SECRETARY GENERAL OR PRESIDENT OF THE PRI (RULING PARTY), PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA OCT 17 SAID HE WOULD RETIRE TO PRIVATE LIFE WHEN HIS TERM OF OFFICE ENDS 1 DEC 1976.

2. THE PRESIDENT RESPONDED TO REPORTERS' QUESTIONS THAT HE SAW LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF BECOMING SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS BECAUSE THE GREAT POWERS RAN THAT INSTITUTION AND BECAUSE HE "WOULD BE A THIRD WORLD SECRETARY." ECHEVERRIA ALSO DENIED THAT HE WOULD BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE PRI, WHICH HAD BEEN ADVOCATED LAST WEEK BY SENATE LEADER ENRIQUE OLIVARES SANTANA. ECHEVERRIA SAID OPPORTUNITY HAD TO BE GIVEN TO NEW GENERATIONS IN THE PARTY -- FOR HIMSELF, HE HAD A LOT OF BOOKS TO READ AND PERHAPS SOME TO WRITE.

3. COMMENT: THE SUGGESTION THAT ECHEVERRIA WOULD BECOME PRI PRESIDENT TOUCHED A SENSITIVE NERVE HERE, POLITICANS AWKWARDLY DODGING REPORTERS' QUESTIONS WITH COMMENTS SUCH AS "THE PARTY WILL HAVE TO DECIDE", POLITICAL COLUMNISTS COMING OUT

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RATHER STRONGLY AGAINST THE IDEA. IN AN UNUSUALLY DIRECT

EDITORIAL OCT 20, EXCELSIOR ASSESSED THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION AS RESTORING TRANQUILITY (AFTER 1968 RIOTS) AND ENCOURAGING PUBLIC DISSENT AND MORE OPEN COMMENT ON ILLS IN MEXICAN SOCIETY. THIS WAS LARGELY POSSIBLE, EXCELSIOR SAID, BECAUSE EXECUTIVE POWER WAS UNIPERSONAL WITHIN THE SIX YEAR TERM. AFTER HIS TERM ENDS ECHEVERRIA MIGHT WELL DEDICATE HIS TALENTS TO "WELL DELIMITED TASKS IN THE PUBLIC REALM ... BUT THE POLITICAL AND JURIDICAL POWER OF THE PRESIDENCE MUST BE TRANSMITTED IN ITS ENTIRELY ON DEC 1, 1976 TO JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO. HISTORY INDICATES THIS. THE HEALTH OF REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS CALLS FOR IT."

4. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT WILL QUIET FEARS, AROUSED BY HIS APPARENTLY UNILATERAL DECISION TO NAME LOPEZ PORTILLO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND CHANGES IN THE PRI AFTERWARDS (SEE MEXICO 8836), THAT HE SEEKS TO RETAIN A POLITICAL ROLE AFTER HE LEAVES OFFICE. WITH THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL SLOT LOOKING MORE IMPROBABLE EVERY DAY, MEXICANS ARE WONDERING JUST WHAT WILL OCCUPY THE PRESIDENT WHEN HIS TERM IS OVER. THE ONE THING THEY ARE CONFIDENT HE WILL NOT DO IS RETIRE TO HIS STUDY.

BRANDIN

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